

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A device for effecting continuous treatment of a metal strip by means of a treatment liquid, comprising:

at least one treatment tank for accommodating a treatment liquid;

a guide for guiding the metal strip through the at least one treatment tank for accommodating a treatment liquid;

at least one pump circulation tank for at least one of preparing, storing and holding the treatment liquid, the pump circulation tank being arranged directly under the treatment tank, the at least one pump circulation tank having a bottom with a slope over its entire length, wherein the slope is aligned in at least one of in the strip running direction and transversely in relation to the strip running direction; and

at least one ~~horizontal~~ seal located at a contact surface between the bottom of the treatment tank and the top of the at least one pump circulation tank, wherein said at least one seal substantially prevents escape of volatile constituents of said treatment liquid from said pump circulation tank.

2. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the treatment tank is configured as a shallow tank.

3. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 2, further comprising at least one cover on the treatment tank.

4. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the pump circulation tank and the treatment tank form a unit.

5. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed claim 1, wherein the treatment tank is structurally mounted on the at least one pump circulation tank.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the treatment tank has a bottom that forms a cover for the at least one pump circulation tank.

8. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the treatment tank and the pump circulation tank are comprised of a plastic polypropylene.

9. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the treatment tank and the at least one pump circulation tank are comprised of rubberized steel.

10. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising run-off chambers or at least one run-off accommodating a change in length connecting the treatment tank to the at least one pump circulation tank.

11. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 10, wherein the run-off is arranged centrally in the tank in the strip running direction.

12. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 10, wherein the treatment tank has a bottom sloping down toward the run-off.

13. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 10, further comprising a space in the run-off chamber between a separating wall in the run-off chamber and an outside wall of the run-off chamber, a flap closing the space in a gastight manner and the flap can be actuated from outside the tanks and the chamber.

14. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising at least one connecting line arranged between the pump circulation tank and the treatment tank for at least one of ventilating and venting the pump circulation tank.

15. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising pumps for pumping treatment liquid from the at least one pump circulation tank into the treatment tank.

16. (Currently Amended) A method for modifying a treatment device for a metal strip by a treatment liquid, wherein the metal strip is guided through at least one treatment tank for accommodating the treatment liquid, the method comprising:
removing the treatment tank,
installing a shallow treatment tank and a pump circulation tank in place of the removed treatment tank; and
~~providing~~ ~~locating~~ at least one ~~horizontal~~ seal at a contact surface between the bottom of the treatment tank and the top of the pump circulation tank, said at least one seal adapted to substantially prevent escape of volatile constituents of said treatment liquid from said pump circulation tank, wherein,
the shallow treatment tank has a bottom with a slope over the entire length, the slope being aligned in the strip running direction; and wherein
the pump circulation tank, has a bottom with a slope over the entire length of the bottom, wherein the slope is aligned in at least one of the strip running direction and transversely in relation to the strip running direction, for causing largely complete emptying of the pump circulation tank or the shallow treatment tank.

17. (Canceled)

18. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 16, further comprising arranging the at least one pump circulation tank directly under the shallow tank.

19. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 16, wherein the metal strip is guided horizontally and the treatment liquid is a pickling liquid.

20. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the guide is operable to guide the strip horizontally through the treatment tank.

21. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:
at least one run-off chamber accommodating a change in length, connecting the treatment tank to the at least one pump circulation tank; and
a space in the run-off chamber between a separating wall in the run-off chamber and an outside wall of the run-off chamber and a flap closing the space in a gas-tight manner, wherein the flap can be actuated from outside the tanks and the chamber.